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Mrs. J. W. Roosevelt
2/28/11

MR. JAY'S LETTER

ON THE RECENT

RELINQUISHMENT OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE.

DR. H. EDMUND J. KOCH,

Chairman of the Ex. Com. of Adopted Citizens, &c.

SIR: I cordially thank your Committee for the honor they have done me in asking my assistance at the meeting, on the 31st instant, "for the purpose of supporting our Government in reaffirming the Monroe doctrine, and for a strict execution of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln by the military and civil authorities of the United States." The unconditional loyalty and love of country that characterize your preamble and resolutions command my heartiest approval.

Amid the excitement caused by domestic rebellion we have permitted the Government, without public remonstrance, to drift from its ancient moorings in reference to European influence on the American continent; and now that the determination and the ability of the American people to restore in its completeness the national unity, the national integrity, and the national supremacy, are, as we believe, definitely settled, it is proper that we should recall our olden principles, and take care that, in our intercourse with foreign powers, there be no relinquishment of our rightful claims, no yielding to foreign pretensions in derogation of our honor or our rights. Let me add, that no class of our people are better fitted to appreciate the importance of preserving unimpaired the Monroe doctrine in reference to the neighboring territory of Mexico

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and the Antilles than our adopted fellow-citizens of European birth. Nor has the discussion of the question which you have introduced been commenced a moment too soon. The *National Intelligencer*, at Washington, has, within the last few days, made the startling announcement that the Monroe doctrine "no longer exists, save as a presidential precedent, which Congress declined to endorse;" and the recent diplomatic correspondence of the State Department shows, with the utmost frankness, that, in the part we have acted towards Mexico, when attacked by the triple alliance of England, France, and Spain, the Monroe doctrine has been as completely ignored as though it had never received the sanction of American statesmen nor the hearty approval of the American people.

The Monroe doctrine embraced these three points: first, that the American continents, in view of the free and independent condition they have assumed, ought not to be considered as subjects of future colonization by any European power; next, that we should consider any attempt by those powers to extend their system to this hemisphere as dangerous to our safety; and, lastly, that we could not view any interposition by European powers for oppressing the American Governments, or controlling, in any manner, their destiny, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.

I believe that, so far as the North American continent is concerned, and especially that part of it that lies between Texas and the Isthmus, the Monroe doctrine, as thus declared, in all three of its points, is approved by an overwhelming majority of the loyal citizens of our Republic.

Now, what has been the course of our Government in regard to the triple armed expedition against Mexico? It appears, from a letter of Mr. Dayton, dated June 5, 1862, that he had been forbidden even to demand an explanation of its aim and object, but simply to say that our Government would be happy to receive such explanations if voluntarily tendered. Upon this polite announcement, Mr. Thouvenel volunteered explanations to this effect: that the French troops did not go to Mexico to interfere with the existing form of Government, nor to ac-

quire an inch of territory, nor to remain indefinitely in the country; and, thereupon, Mr. Dayton was advised from Washington that "Mr. Thouvenel's assurances were eminently satisfactory to the President."

Even then there were warnings that might have modified that eminent satisfaction. Mr. Dayton frankly declared that it would be difficult to reconcile the published opinions of the commissioners of the three powers with those declarations of the French Government; and our minister to Mexico, Mr. Corwin, had written, on the 24th March, 1862, expressing his fears that if the allies should take the field to establish a government, or it they should get control of the public lands, "Mexico would thenceforth be an European colony."

Now recall the fact, patent to the whole world, that the inevitable result of the joint attack on Mexico, if not its evident intent, must be to control in some manner its destiny; and apply to that fact the language of President Monroe, that we could not view such an interposition on the part of any European power "in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States;" and it would seem as if these words, uttered in 1823, had been spoken in direct reference to the present emergency; for after England and Spain had retired from the alliance—with what degree of fairness, of honor, or of glory, it is not now necessary to inquire—the French Emperor, writing from Fontainebleau, on the 3d of July, 1862, to General Forey, gave him his explanation of the matter, which differs materially from those which, when given by Mr. Thouvenel to Mr. Dayton, were so eminently satisfactory at Washington. The Emperor says: "We have an interest in this—that the republic of the United States be powerful and prosperous; but we have none in this—that she should seize possession of all the Mexican Gulf, dominate from thence the Antilles, as well as South America, and be the sole dispenser of the products of the New World."

Here we have, somewhat late in the day, but expressed with admirable distinctness, one, at least, of the motives of the French Emperor; and however excellent an argument may be made to prove his right to feel an interest in the future of

this continent, and to exert his skill and his power to circumscribe the boundaries and limit the influence of the American republic, it is clear, without any argument at all, that the scheme of Louis Napoleon, now being carried out in Mexico, without, so far as we know, one word of remonstrance from the State Department, is a matter of the profoundest interest to the American people, and especially to those of them who believe that when this rebellion is crushed and slavery abolished there is before us a career of national greatness and prosperity that may gather to us, not by war and conquest, but of their own accord and by the attraction of self-interest, the territories that adjoin us on the north and on the south, and make us more completely than at present an ocean-girt republic.

From a diplomatic correspondence with Mexico, not long since published in our newspapers, it would appear that at that time Mexico thought she had reason to complain, not of a want of friendly sympathy, but of much more than that—of a disregard of impartial neutrality; that she complained that we were permitting the French Emperor to ship warlike stores from New York to assist him in the conquest of her territory, in dereliction of the very principles which we had complained that England had violated toward ourselves.

Whether these complaints of Mexico were in any respect well founded, I do not know; but the fact that such complaints were warmly urged seemed to indicate that our position in regard to her invasion by France has been one, at least, of cold indifference.

If such indifference had been the imperative result of our own exigencies in regard to the rebellion, the American people might be justly content that the welfare of our own republic should not be hazarded by an ill-timed adherence to the Monroe doctrine at a critical moment. But this idea is contradicted by the fact that, while the preparations of the triple alliance were being made, repeated assurances were given by the State Department to our ministers abroad, that "the end of the war was in sight;" that "there would be a short and rapid series of successes over a disheartened conspiracy, and then all

would be over." And the very letter (April 22, 1862) that conveyed to Mr. Dayton the satisfaction of the Government at the assurances of Mr. Thouvenel, advised him of the most gratifying indications of the early restoration of the peace of the country.

Mr. Dayton had been recently assured also by the Secretary, on the 26th March, that "Charleston cannot long hold out, and the fall of Savannah is understood to be a question of days, not of weeks. Mobile cannot stand after the fall of these and New Orleans."

It is clear from these reiterated assurances, enforced as they were by elaborate reviews of our military position, that the standard of our nationality was not lowered, that the Monroe doctrine was not given to the winds, and that Mr. Dayton was not forbidden to demand explanations of the meaning of the expedition against Mexico from any real conviction on the part of the Secretary that the necessities of our position compelled us to don the mantle of humility, and to advise Louis Napoleon, with bated breath, that we awaited in silence his imperial pleasure, and would receive with gladness such explanations as he might be pleased to offer. The explanations he condescended to give, which did not satisfy our minister—the eminent satisfaction they afforded at Washington, notwithstanding the fears of Mr. Corwin—and the real explanation as subsequently given by the Emperor to Gen. Forey—constitute a page in our history which, happily, is without a precedent in the past, and should be without a counterpart in the future.

The Monroe doctrine does not imply, as some seem to suppose, any interference with the just rights of foreign powers, but simply a due regard to our national welfare. Our honorable and gallant fellow-citizen, Gen. Clay, whose bravery in the defence of free speech in Kentucky in olden times will always command admiration, recommended, in a well-known diplomatic letter, published by the State Department—a letter in which some passages were omitted, but this recommendation carefully retained—that "money and men should be sent into Ireland, India, and all the British dominions all over the world, to stir up revolt," &c.

Of such a recommendation, notwithstanding the significant sanction it then received by its official promulgation, and notwithstanding the yet more significant sanction it has very recently received in his reappointment, I believe the American people, almost to a man, will disapprove, as in utter violation of the Laws of Nations, and at variance with the dignity and the principles of a Christian people. But a recognition of the Monroe doctrine involves no such grievous wrong to a foreign nation to be secretly inflicted in time of peace; it requires only an open and honorable avowal of principles that for forty years have been regarded as a component part of American policy, and which we believe cannot now be surrendered, as they have been in the case of France and Mexico, without a diminution of our national dignity, and a derogation from that international respect which we have been accustomed to command in Europe.

It is the aim of the rebel sympathizers in our midst—of the party that has adopted the name and the symbol of Copperheads—to impair and destroy, as far as possible, that pride of nationality which, from the birth of our republic, Americans have been taught to cherish. How completely they have succeeded in extinguishing all pride of country and every sentiment of honor in their own breasts, has been disclosed to-day in the remarkable letter of Lord Lyons. The leaders of the Peace Democrats in New York gathered around the aristocratic representative of the British Government, not to protest against the burning of American ships by English pirates, but to invoke his lordship's assistance in a plot for foreign intervention in our domestic affairs, anticipating the humiliation and dismemberment of the republic. Well may the Southern rebels, waging open war against the Government, recoil with scorn from the mean treachery of their cowardly allies at the North! But it becomes the Administration, in view of so pitiable an exhibition of American degeneracy, to maintain with the more earnest fidelity, at home and abroad, that high national tone which befits the dignity of a nation, the brightness of whose career, temporarily checked by internal treachery and what is now termed "foreign neutrality," will yet culminate in a splendor that shall indicate to the world the star of empire.

I have left myself, sir, no room to touch upon the other topic of your meeting—the President's Emancipation Policy—upon which I will only remark that I doubt the expediency of discussing it. With or without the Proclamation, in a war waged by slavery against the life of the nation, slavery was bound to die, in accordance with the warning once eloquently given by Mr. Seward when, admitting that, under the bond of the Constitution, it was entitled to its pound of flesh, he declared that, if it drew one drop of blood, its life was forfeit.

Not by single drops, nor on a single battle-field, but from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, has slavery shed, in torrents, the life-blood of our best and bravest. I agree with Mr. Seward that its life is forfeit and that slavery must die. With that conviction, clearly foreseen and warningly declared by many slaveholders in advance of the rebellion as its inevitable result, I am content, without caring to discuss the questions raised by sympathizers with rebellion, upon the terms of the Proclamation.

Tens and hundreds of thousands of our brave soldiers are fighting to preserve the life of the republic, and the peace and prosperity of their children's children; and although in our opinion, and in that of Southern statesmen before the war began, "the end will be abolition," it is a wicked device of our enemies to pretend that abolition is the object of the war. I am aware that this doctrine, although absolutely refuted by the President in his Messages and in his letter to Mr. Greeley, has been apparently sanctioned by the official utterances of Mr. Thurlow Weed, who, while a commissioner in Europe, accredited from the State Department, is reported to have said, in London, so long since as 3d February, 1862:

"As to the prospects of the future, the Admistration not only desired, but expected, emancipation as the fruit and result of the war; slavery was and would be burned out of every acre and rood of territory conquered from the rebels, so that, by process of war and by legal enactments, if the United States Government were successful, slavery would cease to exist."

Such utterances, although made with high official sanction, are calculated to mislead the people, and seem—without, as I

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believe, the shadow of justice—to convict the President of insincerity, by intimating that a desire for emancipation was influencing his conduct of the war for long months prior to the adoption of the Proclamation as a matter of pure military necessity. The war is prosecuted by the President in fulfillment of his Constitutional oath to preserve the unity and enforce the laws of the republic; and if, when our national integrity is restored, it shall be found that slavery has received its death blow, we need not seek for the cause of its overthrow in the cabinet of Mr. Lincoln, but recognize the truth proclaimed, in 1850, by the Hon. Mr. Boyce, of South Carolina, that if the slaveholders should secede from the Union the institution of slavery would be doomed, and that the great God, in their blindness, would have made *them* the instruments of its destruction.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JOHN JAY.

194 Fifth Avenue,
New York, March 30, 1863.

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